

COMPATIBLE
FOR
STEREO AND
4 CHANNEL
QUADRAPHONIC
EQUIPMENT
9104/3



GLUCK

Alceste

Ethel Semser, Enzo Seri, Bernard Demigny, Jean Mollien,
Jean Hoffman — Paris Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus —
conducted by Rene Leibowitz



3 RECORD SET

This Recording is COMPATIBLE FOR STEREO AND QUADRAPHONIC Equipment and contains *four independent music channels*. When used with various new quadraphonic playback systems, it will produce the dramatic impact and the ultimate fidelity in quadraphonic reproduction. When used on standard stereophonic equipment it produces a full-fidelity, two channel program without damage to or loss of four channel information.

ENCODED QS SYSTEM

Gluck's first operatic endeavors prove his "Neopolitan" training and tradition. For twenty years he wrote great quantities of Italian operas and some French "opéra comiques." It was only in Vienna, in 1761, upon his encounter with the poet and politician Ranineri di Calsabigi that the idea of his famous "reform" germed in his mind. The actual reform process developed in two stages. At first, tentatively, in Vienna when Gluck and Calsabigi produced three major Italian operas: ORFEO ED EURIDICE (1762), ALCESTE (1767), and PARIDE ED ELENA (1770): then, definitively, in Paris, when Gluck undertook to rework both ORFEO and ALCESTE, adopting French librettos (the one for ALCESTE was rewritten by Du Rollet) and extending his reform ideas to their most radical conclusions.

First experimented in ORFEO, all these innovations become permanent and concrete features in ALCESTE. The drama itself, completely penetrated by the music, is thus endowed with a musical architecture of monumental plasticity and unity. On the other hand, the specific musical means employed by Gluck — especially when compared to those of the old opera seria — are rich, manifold and varied. There are many choral sections: the chorus itself is sometimes active and sometimes merely contemplative. There are also ballet sections, ensembles, solo sections (using sometimes small and sometimes large musical forms); the recitativos are not only organically linked to the general "flow" of music and action, but they even become the vivifying breath of the whole structure. Furthermore these recitativos are constantly set to an orchestral background which displays varied techniques such as secco, accompagnato, misurato and even a sort of light-motivic structure (wherein the repetitions of a pronounced musical phrase create a firm unity), a good example of which is to be found in the big recitativo of the high priest in the first act.

A genuine musical performance should only have one aim, which is to present the work performed in its complete authenticity. This is why no efforts were spared here in trying to prepare a recording which had to be both complete and faithful to the composers intentions. We take pride in stating that we have done everything in our power in order to offer the record collector a recording which does not allow for easy solutions such as cuts in the score or other "tricks" of this kind. When the chorus is divided into two parts, one of which sings on the stage, while the other is off-stage, we have tried to achieve the same effect by careful handling of the microphone. When divided into soloists (the "Choryphées") and chorus proper, the solo parts are not being sung by members of the chorus (as is so often the case) but by outstanding soloists. The recitativos (the importance of which we have emphasized above) have not been abandoned to the all too frequent loose treatment, but have been performed in the most rigorous musical fashion, allowing for adequate freedom whenever necessary.

GLUCK Alceste

Flute Soloist — Jean Pierre Rampal



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CAST

Alceste	Ethel Semser
Admete	Enzo Seri
The High Priest	Bernard Demigny
Apollo	
Evander	Jean Mollien
Hercules	Jean Hoffman
Herald	
4th Chorus Soloist	
1st Chorus Soloist & 1st Woman of the People—	Janine Lindenfelder
2nd Chorus Soloist & 2nd Woman of the People—	Simone Codinas
3rd Chorus Soloist—	Jacques Coquier
The Oracle	Lucien Mans
Thanatos	

1776 PARIS VERSION
IN FRENCH

Synopsis

Act I.

Admetus, King of Thessaly, is at the point of death. His people beseech the gods to spare his life. Alcestis, the Queen, joins in the people's supplications for her husband. They all proceed to the Temple of Apollo to offer up their prayers in the presence of the High Priest. The Oracle speaks: Admetus must die unless someone offers to die in his stead. The people flee in dismay. Alcestis, realizing that she alone will have the courage to offer up her life, hesitates only a moment, then consigns herself to Death.

Act II.

The King recovers and the people rejoice. They and Admetus are unaware that Admetus owes his life to Alcestis. Admetus questions Alcestis. Unable to hide her tears, Alcestis evades his questioning as to "who was the hero" who saved his life, but at last admits that she is the voluntary sacrifice. Admetus refuses to face life without her and implores the gods to strike him, their intended victim. But she, for her part, prays the gods to spare Admetus' life. At last, mourned by her people, Alcestis sets out on her way to Hades.

Act III.

As the people mourn the loss of their Queen, the demi-god Heracles appears. His glorious labors finished, he can now present himself to his old friend Admetus. When he learns of the Oracle and the dread fate hanging over the house of Admetus, he vows to the people that, for friendship's sake, he will save Alcestis from death. He, too, sets out towards Hades, to which dire regions both Alcestis and Admetus have preceded him. Trembling with fear, but strengthened by love, Alcestis reaches the Gates of Hades. But there she meets Admetus. Again they dispute as to who shall die, again they protest that neither can live without the other. The god of death, Thanatos, appears, and gives Alcestis the opportunity to renounce her vow. She reasserts it, and demands that the Gates be opened. As the Spectres of Hades swarm about them, Heracles appears. He combats the evil spirits and repels them. Whereat, the god Apollo appears and the evil regions vanish. Apollo praises Heracles and promises him immortality. He then praises Alcestis and Admetus and says that forever they will be the model of married love. Happy in their reunion, they return to earth together and are welcomed by a jubilant people.

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OLYMPIC RECORDS CORPORATION/200 WEST 57TH STREET, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

DISTRIBUTED BY EVEREST RECORDS, 10920 WILSHIRE BLVD., SUITE 410, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90024



SIDE 1

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GLUCK

ALCESTE (Complete)

Act I: Overture 27:15

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SIDE 2

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GLUCK
ALCESTE

Act I: (concluded) 26:50

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SIDE 3

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ALCESTE

Act II: Ballet 26:55

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SIDE 4

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ALCESTE

Act II: (concluded) 27:30

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SIDE 5

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ALCESTE

Act III: (beginning) 28:15

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SIDE 6

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**GLUCK
ALCESTE**

Act III: (concluded) Ballet 29:20

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